Faith & Inspiration

At What Cost?

Photo by Aleksandra Sapozhnikova on Unsplash

By Vincent V. Marshburn -

The gospel drama of redemption is a history-spanning and encompassing saga which, according to the Bible, has its origin in the mind and heart of God from before the creation of the cosmos (Ephesians 1:4-5, 1 Peter 1:18-21, 2 Timothy 1:9). Christians understand that the Incarnation is an incredibly important aspect of God's entire plan of ultimate restorative renaissance. We also recognize that in so many ways, the Incarnation was only the beginning of the fulfillment of the true cost of that redemption. The fact of Jesus's birth — that is, the occurrence of the Son of God taking on human form — is not merely some sweet or endearing story from long ago that is intended to evoke maudlin sentimentality. But rather, it represents the extreme depths and degrees of the audacious undertaking that God was willing to conduct to make the reclamation and regeneration of Creation possible.

To be sure, there are those who are quite appalled and repulsed by the very concept of a God who would permit his own Son to endure the grueling ordeal of the human condition and then to suffer and die. Indeed, what father in his right mind would subject his son to the worst possible suffering and horror imaginable — not merely the torment of the body, the physical anguish of scourging and crucifixion, but the impossibly soul-wrenching, heart-stopping, mind-twisting agony of bearing every consequence of sin. Vicarious atonement required that the Son must wholly and willingly submit to this judgment on our behalf.

In truth, the Bible does not flinch from addressing the brutal and devastating cost of sin. Such severity of wrath attests to the seriousness of God's holiness. While critics will often object to a notion of propitiation through blood, citing that "God is love" (1 John 4:16), they fail to account for the fact that God is also righteous and just (Psalm 33:5, Psalm 145:17, Romans 3:21-22, 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8). And thus, with a complete lack of irony, there are those who presume to judge God himself.

This then is the heart of the apparent absurdity and contradiction: Almighty God, creator of the universe, was willing to risk his own esteem and glory by subjecting himself to his own creation. In a baffling demonstration of paradoxical humility, God engaged in a most unthinkable enterprise of reconciliation. Some have characterized such efforts at accomplishing redemption as "desperate" and "reckless." It is not always easy to comprehend or sympathize with what might be perceived as apparent moral dilemma. What are acceptable lengths to which someone should go to achieve the greater good?

In a later episode of the television series "Star Trek: Deep Space 9," Benjamin Sisko finds himself and his fellow members of Starfleet embroiled in a cataclysmic war against an intractable enemy known as the Dominion. The various governments and military forces in this part of the galaxy, including the United Federation of Planets, the Klingon Empire, and the Cardassian Union, have had to make difficult decisions regarding alliances and adversaries.

The Federation and Klingons maintain a relatively stable coalition of mutual survival, while the Cardassians have, at least ostensibly, adamantly aligned with the Dominion. The Romulan Star Empire, a longtime rival of the Federation and other factions at large, insists on remaining resolutely neutral throughout this conflict, having signed a non-aggression pact with the Dominion. Romulans, a species related to the logic-fixated Vulcans, are an inherently suspicious people, and prefer surreptitious manipulation and deception rather than open confrontation, unless faced with no other options.

Sisko has grown weary of the perpetual casualty reports and is at wit's end regarding the continual incursions into Federations space by Dominion forces. He discerns that the Romulans' refusal to intervene in the Dominion's transit through their territory is facilitating the enemy's raids and invasion against Federation worlds. In frustration and desperation, Sisko solemnly and grimly concludes that the only way to turn the tide of the war is to somehow convince the Romulans to join the Federation and Klingons against the ruthless conquerors. However, the Romulans are not easily convinced to change positions, and this will require extraordinary measures — perhaps even requiring resorting to duplicity and subterfuge.

Sisko recruits the services of a notorious, enigmatic exiled Cardassian named Garak. Together they devise a ruse to present fabricated evidence of Dominion betrayal to a Romulan senator in order to persuade him of the folly of trusting the Dominion. As the plot unfolds, a series of complicated and nefarious events culminates in the death of not only the Romulan senator, but another accomplice in this scheme. It turns out that Garak, in his usual devious, dubious, and unscrupulous manner, has manipulated pawns on the board to achieve an intended outcome — the outcome being the Romulans sufficiently compelled to blame the Dominion for the death of their senator and, thus, formally declaring war against the now common enemy.

Sisko is understandably conflicted regarding the results and is left to wonder at what price peace and freedom. Garak attempts to "console" Sisko with a justification of their actions.

GARAK: *And if your conscience is bothering you, you should soothe it with the knowledge that you may have just saved the entire Alpha Quadrant and all it cost was the life of one Romulan senator, one criminal, and the self-respect of one Starfleet officer. I don't know about you, but I'd call that a bargain.*

Later, Sisko records a personal log in which he expresses, interestingly, not remorse but rather resignation.

SISKO: *So I lied, I cheated, I bribed men to cover the crimes of other men. I am an accessory to murder. But most damning thing of all, I think I can live with it. ... Garak was right about one thing. A guilty conscience is a small price to pay ...*

Are there things which should never be sacrificed? But are there things of which sacrifice represents a commitment to a higher ideal or purpose?

With the Incarnation, we are likewise obliged to face the question of cost. How and why was the Father willing to sacrifice his Son for others, even for those who might ultimately reject and scorn his immeasurable consideration and devotion?

This is the truth of the Incarnation: The birth of Jesus was the preparation for the price of redemption. The mercy and remission with which we have been afforded came at the most inconceivable and excruciating cost. God was willing to stake his honor, his reputation, even his own Son's life, so that we could reclaim the intimacy and fellowship we shared with him in Eden. At what cost? In the words of an old song: "To a world that was lost he gave all he could give, to show us a reason to live."

Homestead High Receives Honor as Purple Star of Distinction Designation

Photo by Alexis Brown on Unsplash

By David Volz -

Homestead Senior High School students who have moved around the nation will get some additional support as they adjust to a new high school environment.

Vincent Bugeja, a retired Air Force colonel who now is the department head of the Homestead High Air Force Junior ROTC program, was able to get the school designated as a Florida Purple Star of Distinction Designation for at least the next three school years.

"Military families move around the nation and the world. Sometimes, a military member will move once a year. This means their children are displaced from their schools as much as every year. Sometimes student struggle to fit into their new school environment," said Bugeja.

He is encouraging JROTC students to help the new students from military families.

"Some of the students need some encouragement, while others make the transition to a new high school easily," said Bugeja.

He hopes that students of military families who have just moved to Homestead High and receive support will then offer support to other military-connected students who are new to the school.

To become established as a Purple Star school, Bugeja had to go through some bureaucratic hoops.

In addition to completing extensive paperwork, he had to show that the Homestead High School community had a strong support for the military. For example, one question he received was, "Does the school show support for the military by participating in local activities, such as military ceremonies and parades?"

The Florida Purple Star School of Distinction Designation was established by the Florida legislature in 2021. The Florida Purple Star School District Program was established by the Florida legislature in 2024.

Once awarded, schools and districts will maintain their designation as a Purple Star School of Distinction or Purple Star School District for three school years.

The purpose of this program is to recognize schools that support the unique needs of military families, help military-connected students navigate critical challenges, and to provide resources for military-connected students when they are transitioning to a new school environment.

South Dade Robotics Team Succeeds in Competition

South Dade Robotics team members. David Volz

By David Volz -

The South Dade Senior High School robotics team members performed well in the Jingle Bots VEX robotics event it hosted on December 21st.

South Dade entered two teams, known as team A and B, and both teams qualified for the quarterfinals.

The team members were freshmen and students who are new to robotics. The game they played was known as High Stakes, where the students built and programed robots to compete.

During the game, the robots, which are driven by students, pick up rings and stake them on mobile goals. The teams form alliances and then participate in the event, of which there were 48 teams participating.

"The competition went well. There was a problem where a robotic broke down and the kids had to fix it and move on," said Shawn Waring, robotics teacher and club sponsor at South Dade.

They had to form alliances with other teams and work together during the competition. "This tournament was good for the kids because they gained valuable experience in competition. They were able to test their skills in coding and working with the robots. They learned to work together to solve problems," Waring explained.

Now, it is time for the students to begin working with First Robotics. They will begin working with the larger robots in January and prepare for big competitions in March.

Robotics is a popular program at South Dade High School, and Waring has developed a successful environment where students can learn to build, program, and drive robots in competitive situations.